

PALACE SIGN PERRIN

STEVE PERRIN will sign on for Third Division Crystal Palace today (Tuesday) and begin a two year contract with the club (writes **Stuart Earp**).

The shock news was released this week after some hectic weekend activity. Palace's controversial manager Malcolm Allison had talks with Perrin and Wanderers' manager Brian Lee at Bisham Abbey on Friday. Yesterday, Steve went up to Selhurst Park and had a good look around before doing some light training. He will sign forms today.

I spoke to him yesterday evening. "It's all been a bit of a rush but having had a look at the set-up, I feel it is a chance I can't turn down," he said.

Steve played two full seasons for Wanderers having joined them from Borough Road College. He is leaving the teaching trade with some regrets although he says: "I want to reach my full footballing potential. That's what I taught the

kids to do at Christ's College, Finchley and now I've got my chance.

"I think if I work hard at my game I can make a success of it and even if I don't I can always go back to teaching. Wycombe have been good to me over the two years and those two years were part of my life. I certainly enjoyed my time there."

Although Palace's recent history has not been particularly happy — they dropped from the First Division to the Third in two seasons — Steve feels there is only one way they can go — up.

"The feeling I got at Selhurst Park was that the club would soon be going places. I think they are on an upward wave and I hope I will be part of it."

Although Perrin had already signed a contract to play for the Blues this season, Wycombe will not receive a transfer fee for him. Instead, Palace will bring down their first team for a game against Wanderers this season. Steve's contract with Wanderers is likely to be cancelled.

Manager Lee, although sorry to see one of his best players

leaving, felt that Steve would make a success in professional football. "He has got the right attitude. He's willing to learn and willing to have a go. It's Wycombe's loss but we had to do the best we could for the player, and, after all, we can take pride in one of our players signing professional."

Palace manager Malcolm Allison said: "Wycombe had a good season last year and Perrin was outstanding. He was recommended to me by Derek Healey, our chief scout, and after three of our staff had been to watch him we decided to sign him on."

Perrin's attacking flair will certainly leave a big gap for Wycombe to fill next season. Not only do they have to find a centre forward after the loss of Keith Searle last week but now they have only Tony Horsemann left from their regular front three strikers of last term.

In the first half of last season, Perrin was in superb form scoring goal after goal. That form interested several professional clubs including Oxford, Q.P.R., Chelsea, Plymouth and

Bournemouth and it seemed only a matter of time before someone snapped him up.

Whether his deceptively slow style will be suited to the pro' game remains to be seen but anyone who can score goals regularly is much in demand in these defensive days and it would come as no surprise to me if he becomes a regular first teamer. In the two F.A. Cup ties against Bournemouth and Middlesbrough Steve was never out of his depth, indeed, he gave Frank Spraggon, the Boro left back, a real grilling at Loakes Park.

All in all he scored a total of 59 goals for Wycombe, 29 in his first season and 30 last term. During his two years he won a place in the England amateur squad and came on as substitute for his country against Malta at Elm Park, Reading.

Perrin joins another local footballer at Selhurst Park in Dave Kemp, who signed from Slough Town towards the end of last season.

This latest departure takes the number of Wycombe players to turn professional to a staggering nine in the last seven years. First to go was John Pratt, goalkeeper, who joined Reading. Then Viv Busby went to Luton and later Fulham. Peter Suddaby was soon followed to Blackpool by Paul Fuschillo, who later moved to Brighton.

Mick Mellows, after one season with Wycombe, joined Portsmouth where he was a regular front runner last season while Alan Gane played a few games for Brentford and Hereford before joining Chelmsford.

Kenny Swain looked to be one of the best prospects to come from Wycombe and he could well stamp a regular claim with the young Chelsea first team this year. John Delaney spent two seasons with Bournemouth before returning to his old club only this week.

Of the nine, Suddaby and Busby have been the most successful. Perrin has the ability to really make a name for himself in the world of football and it would be no surprise to see him go right to the top.



On his way to professional soccer with Crystal Palace . . . Steve Perrin (left) is expected to sign on for the third Division Club this week after two highly successful seasons with Wycombe Wanderers.